

A Place Called Hope

Preserving wildlife for tomorrow.

Connecticut State Legislators,

March, 2009

S.B. # 994 has the potential to propel Wildlife Nuisance Control and Fur Trapping Hunters into the 21st Century. In this day and age, barbaric torture devices for any living being should no longer be tolerated.

We at A Place Called Hope, Inc., a Raptor Rehabilitation and Education Center, support this change. Rather than listing the redundant facts of why we believe the Leg Hold Trap and other Crushing Trap Devices are inhumane, un-ethical, and immoral we would like to tell you about our personal experience with the devastating injuries caused by a Leg Hold Trap.

A Place Called Hope, Inc. is made up of volunteer wildlife rehabilitators licensed by the state of CT DEP and USFW Services. We specialize in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of our states wild birds, in particular, Birds of Prey. Seven weeks ago, we were asked to take on the intensive care process for a once wild Great Horned Owl who had fallen victim to an illegally set Leg Hold Trap. Her story is one of many, both targeted and non-targeted living creatures who have faced the debilitating impact of a crushing trap device both legally and illegally set.

It was the dead of winter and hunting for this owl had become more difficult due to normal winter conditions. Hungry and following natural instincts for survival, this owl came across food set up as bait for this illegally set trap. As her hunger forced her down, her fate was decided at the very moment the trap crushed shut, nearly severing her foot on impact. In pain, frightened and desperate to escape this predicament, she dragged herself along attached to the barbaric device that held her. Fortunately, she was rescued and brought to Yalesville Animal Clinic in Wallingford, where the amputation of her once strong and capable taloned foot was performed.

Birds of Prey use their feet to hunt their prey in order to survive successfully in the wild. They fly down to their prey and grab with both feet, hold their prey in one taloned foot while they balance with the other as they eat their meal. As a result of being caught in a leg hold trap this owl lost her main line of defense, her ability to hunt and ultimately her freedom.

After the owls initial surgery, we diligently cared for her wound. She was determined to live which made our decision to help her that much easier. Regardless, we knew that even if we were able to heal her amputation site and make it so she could comfortably use her leg as a crutch, her life would forever be changed. Her freedom revoked as a life in captivity was the best we could offer. Yet her will was strong so we worked towards her continued survival as we tended to her tragic wound.

Here we have a once wild, capable, non-targeted bird who was debilitated, placed in an intensive care facility where she tolerated daily bandage changes, frequent vet visits, and was confined indoors where her wild senses were ineffective. She was restrained, manipulated and handled by what she viewed as predators each and every day. She endured two surgical procedures intended to save her life. How frightening this experience must have been for her. After six long weeks of intensive care she succumbed to a systemic infection caused by a rusty trap which ended up being too severe to treat humanely. Our decision to euthanize her was without reservation. She had suffered enough at the hands of humans. She never made it to an outdoor aviary space where she could view the sky once again.

All of this because of the illegal use of a state sanctioned Leg Hold Trap that once set, targets any living being that encounters it. Why? because the state of CT has accepted this dangerous and barbaric method of trapping as a means to support hunting for fur or nuisance wildlife control because that is the way it has always been in the past. We at A Place Called Hope support S.B. # 994 with the intentions that we can all move forward and make necessary changes in order to carry out our mission of *preserving wildlife for tomorrow*. We ask our state of CT to realize her humane duty which should include all living beings, not just our fellow humans and to no longer overlook this inhumane method of hunting to serve any intended purpose. Please join us in our mission and construct the necessary changes for more ethical solutions for the modern ways of today. Support S.B. # 994. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

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